



French authorities step in to save "vital" ferry link

THE future of a "vital" link with the continent has been secured after French authorities agreed to take over its operation.

The Newhaven to Dieppe route had been at risk with the current contract between the Syndicat Mixte de Promotion de l'Activité Transmanche (SMPAT) and operator DFDS due to expire at the end of the year.

However, SMPAT, which is made up of local authority and trade representatives in the Dieppe area, has now said it will run the service itself from the beginning of next year.

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The two vessels serving the route will be rebranded, but DFDS will continue to handle bookings and marketing until the end of March 2016, to ensure a smooth transition.

Councillor [Rupert Simmons](#), East Sussex County Council lead member for economy, said: "This service is vital for the port of Newhaven and of great importance to the county as a whole.

"As well as representing a very significant portion of traffic going through the port, the ferry service brings trade and tourism into

East Sussex, with all the economic benefits that offers.

"We very much welcome this move, and the investment our colleagues in Seine-Maritime have made, and continue to make, to ensure this route can continue.

"We look forward to working even more closely with our French counterparts to promote the service and to strengthen the cultural, heritage and tourism links between the two areas.

"This is more good news for Newhaven at a time when more than £60 million is being invested in the town, including the new University Technical College, a new access road to the port and improved transport links."

The SMPAT is comprised of the Departement de Seine-Maritime, the city authorities in Dieppe and Dieppe Chamber of Commerce.

The body says it will continue to subsidise the route, but in the long-term is seeking to reduce the cost to the French taxpayer by attracting more investment from external partners.

Andy Wells is a Newhaven-based UK sales manager for Euro Channel

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Logistics, a French-owned transport company which carries out up to 3,000 crossings on the route every year.



He said: "Our depot is strategically placed to be near the ferry terminal in Dieppe and the route is absolutely essential for our business. The fact it has been safeguarded is something we welcome wholeheartedly."

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